



Organization:
American National Red Cross, International Services Department

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Headquarters Mailing Address:
2025 E St. NW
Washington D.C. 20006, USA

HQ Contact Persons:
Augustine Gill
Regional Director for Europe, Eurasia
Phone: 202 303 5046
Fax: 202 303 0051
e- mail: gilla@usa.redcross.org

Field Contact Person:
Marina Brakalova
Bulgaria Office Program Manager
Phone: +359 2 81 64 709
Fax: + 359 81 64 786
e-mail: Brakalova@usaredcross.bg

Program title: Bulgaria Floods

OFDA Grant No.: DFD-G-00-05-00150-00/Bulgaria

Country/Region: Bulgaria/ Eastern Europe

Type of Disaster: Floods

Time Period Covered by the Report: July 1, 2005 – September 1, 2005

Program Overview

Widespread flash flooding occurred in Bulgaria in late July and early August 2005. Precipitation reached levels of 140 to 260 liters per square mile, which was more than three to five times the average quantities per month. Rains were particularly intensive in the regions of Shumen, Rousse, Veliko Turnovo, Turgovishte, and Stara Zagora. Precipitation reached 300 liters per square meter at some of the locations, and the situation was most critical in the regions of Turgovishte, Veliko Turnovo, Shumen, Stara Zagora, Rousse, and Pazardzhik.

The rivers Yantra, Toussenski Lom, and their tributaries overflowed and flooding activated several landslides. A state of emergency was declared in the regions of Shumen, Veliko Turnovo, Rousse, Turgovishte, Stara Zagora, and Pazardzhik. Rain torrents damaged housing and public buildings and infrastructure such as roads, streets, railroads, bridges, drain-pipes, and other drainage facilities. People whose houses were damaged beyond repair were temporarily evacuated and housed in public buildings or with relatives.

The American National Red Cross (ARC) supported the Bulgarian National Red Cross (BRC) in the procurement and distribution of emergency relief supplies in seven flood-affected areas to assist 3,750 individuals. An immediate response was organized in all affected regions to meet the needs of the affected population and included distributions of food parcels, mattresses, bedding, and blankets. BRC worked in close collaboration with local entities that were summoned to respond to the emergency -- the Standing Commission for Population Protection in Emergencies under the Council of Ministers and its regional and city branches in the affected regions.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

The program objective was to supplement the daily nutritional needs and improve living conditions for approximately 3,000 persons during the immediate response phase of the emergency -- approximately 30 days -- through the direct distribution of locally procured food parcels, mattresses, blankets, and bedding sets.

AREAS OF ACTIVITY

Region: **Veliko Turnovo**

Distributed items: 200 blankets, 200 mattresses, 200 bedding, 442 food parcels, 175 hygienic parcels
Locations: 6

Region: **Rousse**

Distributed items: 200 blankets, 200 mattresses, 200 bedding, 1405 food parcels
Locations: 31

Region: **Turgovishte**

Distributed items: 200 blankets, 200 mattresses, 200 bedding, 903 food parcels
Locations: 34

Region: **Shumen**

Distributed items: 450 blankets, 325 mattresses, 450 bedding, 256 food parcels

Locations: 12

Region: **Stara Zagora**

Distributed items: 300 blankets, 300 bedding, 156 food parcels

Locations: 5

Region: **Pazardjik**

Distributed items: 277 food parcels

Locations: 1

Region: **Haskovo**

Distributed items: 61 food parcels

Locations: 1

Total Items Distributed:

Blankets	Mattresses	Bedding	Food parcels	Hygienic parcels	Regions	Locations
1350	925	1350	3500	175	7	90

DESCRIPTION OF ASSESSMENTS AND SURVEILLANCE DATA

The Bulgarian Red Cross Regional Branches' main role during the emergency was to conduct situation and needs assessments in the affected regions. These regional branches communicated daily with local authorities to monitor the situation and take necessary actions. BRC regional staff are members of the local standing commissions for population protection in emergencies and, in this capacity, they attended all response coordination meetings.

Bulgarian Red Cross Regional Branches conducted the needs assessments and subsequently relief funds were allocated, based on these assessment findings. The needs and the type of relief were identified based on data and lists provided by the local city administrations of the affected areas. Relief distribution sheets (based on a template provided in advance) contained the following data:

1. Beneficiary ID card number.
2. Beneficiary full name.
3. Beneficiary address.
4. Beneficiary personal identification number.
5. Number of people in the household.
6. Date of receipt.
7. Beneficiary age.
8. Beneficiary sex.
9. Beneficiary signature.

Relief items were purchased in compliance with the Public Procurement Act and in accordance with OFDA and ARC policies and procedures. Vendors were selected based on their bids, the price and delivery arrangements. Mid-term and final evaluations were conducted in Veliko Turnovo and Russe. Each monitoring team consisted of a team leader, administrative member, accountant, and public relations staff.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF TARGETED POPULATION

The BRC branches and the local authorities identified the beneficiaries. The type of relief items were determined based on a the Civil Protection State Agency and local authorities' needs assessment. BRC staff, volunteers, and—in some cases—local authorities carried out the relief distributions. Beneficiaries in the most affected areas received emergency relief items identified during the needs assessments.

The main beneficiary eligibility criterion was defined as “affected by the floods;” additional criteria were: senior citizens above the age of 60, elderly people living alone, single mothers, people with disabilities, and low-income people. The regional branches compiled and approved the beneficiary lists, based on the above criteria and on data provided by the local city administrations.

Total Number of Targeted Beneficiaries: 3,000

Total Number of Reached Beneficiaries: 3,750

SUMMARY OF COST EFFECTIVENESS

Distributed items exceeded the numbers planned in the project description due to discounted offers and market prices identified during the bidding process. Besides distributing the estimated quantities in the original proposal, we were also able to distribute additionally 550 blankets, 550 articles of bedding, 125 mattresses, 500 food parcels, and 175 hygienic parcels. The total relief items supported 3,750 beneficiaries.

OVERALL PERFORMANCE/IMPACT OF PROGRAM (BASED ON TWO MONITORING TRIPS TO ROUSSE AND VELIKO TURNOVO)

How did the situation unfold in the affected regions?

Rousse: The region of Rousse was hit by floods on several occasions in early June and July with multiple areas being affected. The heavy rains caused floods in many areas by causing the micro-dam in Baniska and the rivers Rusenski Lom and Cherni Lom to overflow. Local sewerage systems and small agriculture reservoirs were also affected. Affected municipalities were: parts of the town of Rousse, Dolapite area, the municipalities of Slivo Pole, Borovo, Ivanovo, Dve Mogili, and Byala, and the villages Karavarbovo, Koprivetz, and Dryanovetz as well as many other smaller settlements in the region.

Veliko Turnovo: The affected towns in the district were Pavlikeni, Gorna Oryahovitsa, Polski Trumbesh, Strazitsa, Elena, and Lyaskovets. Rivers overflowed and the flood waters destroyed houses and farmland.

How did the Bulgarian Red Cross respond to the needs of the affected population?

Rousse: The Civil Protection Agency contacted the Bulgarian Red Cross regional branch on the night of the floods. The BRC immediately started emergency relief distribution, using its pre-positioned reserves to the affected population: clothes, blankets, bedding, and shoes. The first wave affected several municipalities: Baniska and Dve Mogili -Karan Varbovka. During the next few days, the needs were assessed and a request for assistance was sent to the BRC headquarters. Joint emergency actions were carried out in Baniska (68 blankets and food parcels distributed to the affected people). Emergency

support was also provided to the municipality of Dve Mogili. The reservoir in Dolna Studena reached its full capacity, and evacuation was under way for the local population. A tent camp and a distribution point were set up in the local stadium. Fortunately, the water level remained under the level of overflowing. The total relief items distributed by the Rousse Red Cross were: 200 blankets, 200 mattresses, 200 bedding sets, and 1405 food parcels.

Veliko Turnovo: Emergency relief items distributed were:

- 175 hygiene parcels at the value of 2800 Bulgarian Lev (BGL);
- 442 food parcels at the value of 4420 BGL. Food parcels were purchased upon donor approval and based on a comparative bid analysis.
- People received 200 blankets, 200 mattresses, and 200 bedding sets.

Were there needs that were not met through the relief intervention?

Rousse: Distribution of humanitarian relief still continues. The situation is getting back to normal and the priority of the population is gradually shifting to reconstruction of damaged houses with materials such as cement, sand, bricks, etc.

Veliko Turnovo: The mayor, Mr. Nikolov, says that there is still need for more hygiene and disinfectant materials.

How did the Bulgarian Red Cross work with local stakeholders (government agencies and NGOs)?

Rousse: Actions were fully coordinated with the Regional Civil Protection office; the Bulgarian Red Cross provided transportation for the relief items; and Red Cross volunteers did the loading and unloading. Although the needs assessment and distribution of relief was still ongoing, heavy rains continued at the beginning of July, threatening to flood new areas.

The BRC worked with the Civil Protection agency to charter a plane and make a flight to record the flow of the rivers and the floods. That helped organize the evacuation of the people in the most endangered areas prior to the floods.

Veliko Turnovo: The mayor of the village of Resen, Ms. Koleva, provided detailed information about the current situation and the way BRC has supported the affected people in the area. The Red Cross in Veliko Turnovo maintained direct contact with all the regional mayors and with representatives of the Civil Protection agency.

What were recommendations from local stakeholders (affected people, Red Cross branches, government agencies, etc.) on how future interventions can be improved?

Rousse: Civil Protection and the BRC branch in Rousse, based on lessons learned from this response, gave the following suggestions:

- Equip a space in the BRC regional warehouse to serve as an emergency shelter for 30 people with supplies for one month;
- Ensure replenishment of the emergency items;

- Equip a self-sustainable mobile Emergency Response Team with items such as a trailer to carry tents, kitchen items, hot-plates, one boat, carrier for transportation of the boat, high passable hauler for the carrier;
- Establish, equip, and train local teams in several municipalities to respond in disasters, including search and rescue operations. That includes insurances and certification for operating specialized equipment.

Veliko Turnovo: There was a delay in gathering information about the flood-affected people because mayors from different areas submitted inconsistent information about the damages. In addition, some mayors (e.g., the village of Kesarevo) submitted the required information with a delay, which affected the distribution schedule. Colonel Petrov stressed the need for emergency funds that BRC can rely on in case of a disaster.

People needed aid in the first 24 hours after the floods when the food supply was critical. Providing food in the first 24 hours after the disaster is a top priority. This could be handled more effectively and efficiently if there were mobile kitchens. Similar to the rest of the regions, Veliko Turnovo stakeholders emphasized the need for an emergency fund to provide people with food and non-food items that are most needed during the initial phase of a disaster. Food parcels were not very useful because of the lack of functioning electrical appliances. BRC's food parcels were sufficient for one or two days, but people were in need of refrigeration, cooking appliances, and other food preparation/storage equipment to cover preparing enough food to meet their nutritional requirements for at least one week. That is why mobile kitchens are necessary and would allow people to cook and store meals.

The Civil Protection agency also recommends that field personnel be trained in First-Response Psychological Support to be better prepared in the future.

How were volunteers involved in the intervention? What were their roles and needs?

Rousse: Red Cross volunteers loaded and unloaded the relief supplies (80 percent of the total workload).

Veliko Turnovo: Volunteer work was performed by people living in the villages and by Bulgarian Red Cross Youth volunteers who assisted with loading, unloading, and sorting of the supplies as well as with organizing fundraising campaigns.

Program Constraints, Adjustments

In some regions relief distribution was delayed for several days and, in some cases, for up to a week after the disaster had struck due to:

- Difficulties accessing affected areas due to extreme flooding.
- Limited human resources at the national and regional level to coordinate relief coming from several donors.

Initial needs assessments showed smaller numbers of affected people, which resulted in initially spending only half of the award amount. As evaluations of the situation continued, the data got more specific over the course of time and additional needs were identified and the remaining funds were reallocated according to the new information.

PHOTOS, SUCCESS STORIES

The program proved to be highly responsive and relevant to the affected population's needs. The initial delay of relief distribution did not affect the program's overall success.. The response coordination team of American Red Cross staff in Bulgaria and their Bulgarian Red Cross counterparts worked effectively together to facilitate the procurement procedure and to closely monitor the successful implementation process.



Damaged area in Veliko Turnovo region



Distribution in Shoumen